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ABSTRACT

The future of Greek letter organizations on campus and the effects of demographic trends and societal changes are considered. In the last decade, Greek membership has increased despite the decrease in students between the ages of 18 and 24 entering college full-time. Greek chapters are primarily at four-year institutions and their members are mainly the traditional age full-time students. In 1984 more than 55% of students in higher education were at community colleges, and nearly 43% were enrolled part-time. There has also been a decline in freshmen entering college directly from high school. Demographic trends also affect residence halls, which in turn affect Greek membership. Greek chapters are suffering from a lack of alumni to provide guidance, financial support, and networking. Topics of concern include: the influence of little sister/little brother organizations as adjuncts to collegiate sororities and fraternities; the use of gender education to improve the image of Greek chapters; the academic aspects of student life; and the problems of substance and alcohol abuse among Greek chapter members. (SW)

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Greek life on campus

How will a changing society affect it?

Susan L. Parrino and Theresa Gallup

What does the future hold for greek letter organizations? Will the bleak years of the 1960s when greek life was becoming obsolete be relived? Or will the rise in greek membership from recent years continue? Will greeks attract new members or will they need to redesign their product?

Every greek system and chapter needs to address these questions. They need to examine not only campus demographics but issues resulting from a changing society as well.

In the last decade, greek membership has increased despite the decrease in students between the ages of 18 and 24 entering college full-time (Brooks, 1986). Greek chapters, which are primarily at four-year public and private schools, draw on the traditional age full-time student population for their memberships. Enrollment projections predict that more women, more minorities, more students older than 25, and more part-time students will soon be attending colleges and universities.

In 1984 more than 55 percent of the students in higher education were at community colleges, and 45 percent were at private or public four-year institutions (Cross, 1984). Nearly 43 percent of the nation's students in 1984 were enrolled part-time. There has been a decline in freshmen entering college directly from high school; more of the country's high school graduates are working one or two years before matriculating in a higher education program (Cross, 1984).

How will changes in the student body affect greeks? Will chapters pledge older members and more minorities? Will they allow part-time students to join?

Demographic trends also affect residence halls, which in turn affect greek membership. As the pool of college-age students decreases, residence halls will be forced to work harder to fill their buildings. Already they are improving their facilities each year, providing students with private rooms, flexible meal plans, exercise rooms, computer rooms, kitchenettes, guest rooms, and attractive lounges. These halls are staffed with employees who are trained to program activities and develop a sense of community and family within the housing unit.

"Demographic trends also affect residence halls, which in turn affect greek membership."

To compete, greek chapters may need to assess their product and capitalize on how their houses are different from the residence halls. Too often fraternities and sororities have lowered their room and board prices instead of marketing their prices as a bargain for the product received.

Another demographic factor still affecting greek life is the lean years of the 1960s. Fewer students pledged then, a fact that means there are now fewer 30- and 40-year-old alumni, the age group most likely to serve as active advisers. Alumni who do volunteer are serving shorter terms. The increasing number of women who work and the significant number of single parents decrease the amount of time both men and women can devote to greek chapters.

Legal liability has deterred some from serving as advisers. Insurance rates have skyrocketed to the point where many chapters cannot afford adequate liability insurance for their advisers.

Regardless of the reasons, greek chapters are suffering from this lack of alumni to provide guidance, financial support, and networking.

Fraternities and sororities need to respond quickly to some problems related not to demographics but to a changing society.

One tradition that should be discarded is the little sister/little brother organization. These auxiliary groups serve no purpose and tend to perpetuate the male/female stereotypes (Bryan, 1986). Fraternities sustain little sister organizations for two reasons: (1) a female presence at social and rush functions to attract men and produce an atmosphere of fun, and (2) a group of individuals to raise funds, provide food for bake sales,

HE 021 185

and perform menial labor such as cleaning the house for rush. Little brother organizations exist to a lesser degree for many sororities. In either case, these organizations undermine greek chapters. A person who wants to be a greek should pledge and become a member.

The Fraternity Executives Association in 1982 adopted a resolution stating that "little sister groups are not desirable adjuncts to collegiate chapters of men's fraternities." But because these auxiliary groups are voluntary, individuals cannot be denied their freedom of association. They cannot be barred from forming such organizations. Instead, each chapter must take a stand, focus on the brothers, and develop relationships with sorority members if they need assistance or advice for rush.

Abolishing little sister/little brother organizations can be the first step in dismantling sex-role stereotypes. Gender education is a logical next step. Organizations and individuals have developed workshops where men and women discuss their roles, responsibilities, behavior, and specific problems. In a program called "Gender Gap," Linda B. Litter (1986), national president of Phi Mu, explores the student behavior as it relates to the relationship between men and women, the perception of their roles, and how this translates into their treatment of each other. The objective is to encourage greeks to think and be responsible.

Greek chapters need to recognize that gender education can improve their image which has been tarnished by reports in the media about gang rapes and sexual assaults in fraternities.

This type of education also prepares men and women for the work world. No longer can one assume supervisors and managers will be male. Increasing numbers of women in management mean changes for both men and women in the work world.

Greeks need also to focus on the academic aspects of student life. Do they value scholarship as they profess in their creeds and mottos? Do they assist members in improving their grades, or do they only pay lip service to study tables, quiet hours, and tutors?

With fewer jobs, many corporations and businesses are requiring higher grade point averages of the students they interview. College and university officials are studying students' grades in relation to cocurricular activities. Award committees and selection committees for campus leadership positions have in some instances raised GPA requirements to attract better students. Greeks should pay attention to this trend and develop ways to upgrade their members' academic performance and to attract the type of member who values the academic experience. They need to instill in their members the importance of academics through rewards, scholarships, and other positive reinforcements. In these ways, greek chapters can strengthen their ability to offer students academic benefits as well as social, recreational, and cultural ones.

"Chapters need to take a critical look at the role alcohol and other substances play in their activities. In many chapters, these substances have become crutches for socializing and having fun."

Finally, greeks must address the problems of substance and alcohol abuse among their members. Some organizations have tried to live up to the "party animal" stereotype, while others have tried to deny that any problem exists. Abstinence isn't the answer. Chapters need to take a critical look at the role alcohol and other substances play in their activities. In many chapters, these substances have become crutches for socializing and having fun. Greeks' reliance on alcohol and other substances is one reason insurance rates are rising. The negative image and higher insurance premiums created by such abuse are the slightest of problems when viewed in the context of the number of students who become addicted.

Administrators who advise greek chapters need to help undergraduates and alumni tackle these problems. Greeks should be encouraged to welcome diversity and not adhere so staunchly to tradition. They should market their product more competitively and actively recruit alumni for guidance. Administrators should provide educational programming emphasizing appropriate behavior and discipline chapters who act inappropriately.

In summary, the college official responsible for advising greek organizations must become aware of demographic and social trends in order to deal effectively with the many needs of students. These administrators need to involve undergraduates and alumni in planning for the future through the establishment of long- and short-range goals. Administrators must follow awareness with a commitment to educate greeks about their alternatives. Students need to be reminded that they are capable young adults who can make decisions and deal positively with peer pressure. These proactive measures —learning and practicing such skills as decision-making, values clarification, and time management, to name a few—will continue to make greek

Continued on page 29

a combined position of union director and director of student activities averaged a $35,377 salary. The combined position exists more frequently in smaller institutions. Overall, 36 percent of all respondents reported that they had a union director position, and 53 percent have combined union and student activities into one director's position.

Table 1 shows the low, average, and high salary by position and size of institution. Totals on the bottom line present data for each staff position at all reporting institutions.

Table 2 summarizes by position the average percent increase over last year for the same person holding the same job, the present average salary, and the number reporting for each position.

Richard D. Blackburn is executive director of the Association of College Unions-International.

Table 2
1987-88 ACU-I Salary Survey

Position	Number Reporting	Average Salary	% Increase over Preceding Year
Union director and director of student activities	224	$35,377	5.41
Union director	152	$39,992	5.17
Associate (or assistant) union director	165	$28,600	5.59
Program director	135	$24,916	5.58
Business manager	105	$27,526	5.46
Operations manager	138	$24,630	5.12
Director of student activities	133	$28,753	5.62
Program adviser	125	$20,615	4.85
Theater director	24	$22,225	4.80
Food service director	95	$33,217	5.02
Recreation area manager	100	$20,758	4.51
Bookstore manager	81	$31,533	5.44
Art and gallery director	29	$21,628	5.60
Outing director	23	$21,087	4.61
Craftshop director	24	$21,325	6.60
Concert coordinator	11	$23,200	4.67
Cinema coordinator	9	$19,067	4.80
Scheduling and reservations manager	169	$18,744	5.23

Dialogue *Continued from page 1*

AIDS are not fired or harassed. As the fear of the disease increases in society, we will unfortunately read of more cases like the one in Florida where the home of three children with AIDS was firebombed. Fear is the breeding ground for irrational and destructive behavior.

If we have no other reason for considering our reaction to AIDS than vested self-interest, we should recognize that unless something is done soon the cost of health insurance is going to skyrocket as more people with the AIDS virus need medical care. It is my belief that there are issues more critical than that; however, not all agree.

Those of us in the college union and student activities area will need to confront the facts of AIDS at some time or another. For us, our personal confrontation came this summer. We hope that from our experience, others in the field may be able to formulate their own ways of dealing with a very complex and emotional issue.

This issue's "Dialogue" is anonymous because the author wants to protect the privacy of the young woman who is suffering from AIDS. It is not our policy to publish anonymous commentaries, but we feel this topic is much too important to go uncovered, merely because of policy.

Greek life *Continued from page 14*

membership a positive tradition that complements a student's academic pursuit. These organizations can be integral, positive parts of the college or university community.

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